



Robin L. Fox at Cankdeska Cikana Community College's Next Steps Program

This is the story of Robin L. Fox. Robin is a Native American woman and an enrolled member of Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold, North Dakota. Robin had a dream of attending college and becoming a nurse. In 2004, Robin met Deb Wilson, the director of the University of North Dakota (UND) Recruitment and Retention of American Indians into Nursing (RAIN) program at a college career fair at Fort Berthold Community College (FBCC) in New Town. The RAIN program is a major subcontractor and service provider for the Next Steps Project. Deb Wilson encouraged Robin to pursue her dreams of becoming a nurse. She offered Robin kind words, information on available services, and a path to pursue.

Like many of her peers, Robin did not follow her dreams as a teen. Due to overwhelming circumstances, she felt her goals were unachievable. Robin was born and raised in Seattle, Washington and had a wonderful life until the loss of her mother. While her mother was still living, she encouraged Robin to apply for the RAIN program. She gave her daughter a RAIN pamphlet she found at the Seattle Indian Health Board office. After the loss of her mother, Robin lived from place to place before becoming homeless. She spent a good part of her life on the streets of Seattle, living out of a backpack. Despite these difficult circumstances, Robin never lost sight of her dream of becoming a nurse. Robin held on to that RAIN pamphlet and

carried that information with her on the streets of Seattle. When the pamphlet became damaged or too difficult to read, she would go to the Indian Center in Seattle to pick up a new one.

Robin met her husband, David Merkley, in 2004 and moved to North Dakota. She brought along that pamphlet with the information on becoming a nurse. She enrolled in the nursing program at FBCC under the Next Steps program. Next, she obtained her License Practical Nursing (LPN) certificate and passed the State boards in 2006. In 2011, she was encouraged by RAIN Mentor Melinda Balderas to pursue her path to becoming a registered nurse (RN). Robin successfully applied to the Dakota Nursing Program at FBCC, and graduated with her Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree in nursing. After passing the RN State boards, she became an RN in 2012!

Robin continues in her nursing education today. Throughout the support and guidance of Liz Yellowbird, her Next Steps Program Mentor, she has entered the RN-BSN distance program at UND. Robin is happily married with five beautiful daughters and is currently residing in Parshall, North Dakota. Upon completion of her advanced nursing degree, she plans to work providing healthcare services in the scope of her practice on the Fort Berthold Reservation. Robin is very appreciative of the Next Steps Program and those early words of encouragement and support that Deb Wilson offered her so many years ago.

State: North Dakota

Ethnicity: American Indian

Age: 30-39

Gender: Female

Special Population: low income

Community Type: Rural client

Occupational Sub-Category: Direct Patient Care